

William Clark, First Settler in Clarks Summit

Deacon William Clark was born in Rhode Island in 1757. As a mere 18 year old lad Clark joined the Continental Army and became a soldier in the Revolutionary War. In 1775, Clark served with distinction at the Battle of Bunker Hill. He was also with General George Washington at the Battle of Trenton in 1776 and during the brutal winter at Valley Forge in 1777-1778. As payment for his services in the Continental Army, he was given a grant of 800 acres of land in northeast Pennsylvania.

The 800 acres of land that Clark was given was originally part of a land grant given to the colony of Connecticut by King James. Unfortunately, King Charles the II granted William Penn a similar tract of land. Portions of the two land grants covered the same are. To make matters even more complicated, Native American tribes also laid claim to the area. A dispute over the land took place. Settlers of Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Native Americans engaged in a series of deadly battles. This conflict is known in most history books as the Yankee-Pennamite War.

The parcel of land granted to William Clark was part of the land in this dispute. Thus when William Clark traveled to Pennsylvania to stake his claim to his land in 1797 he was informed by the Land Claim Office in Luzerne County that his claim was “worthless.” Clark was told that if he wanted the land he would have to pay for it. Clark decided to purchase a parcel of land consisting of 200 acres. He later purchased an additional 348 acres in 1820 for which he paid \$435.19.

In March of 1799, Clark and his three sons, William, Jeremiah, and John arrived at their plot of land in northeast Pennsylvania. There land was located in an area known as the Ebington wilderness. Today, the Ebington Wilderness is known as Abington Heights. Clark and his sons used their axes and other implements brought for their survival, and built a log cabin on the hill where Clarks Green Cemetery is now located.

After establishing a homestead, Clark returned to Connecticut and arranged to bring the rest of their family to Pennsylvania. He brought back with him his wife, Mary, three daughters, and six sons. This second journey was more difficult than the first because the Clarks were carrying all of their worldly possessions. They traveled on the Hudson and Delaware Rivers via canoes, and strapping their belongings on their backs. When on land the Clarks used a dray to transport their belongings. A dray consists of

two long poles that are attached together and used to drag ones belongings along the ground.

After bringing his family to Ebington, Clark set to work clearing land to establish a farm. As he and his family worked, Clark, and other settlers who began moving into the area, quickly realized that they had dangerous and unexpected problem-wolves. The wolves that inhabited the area were a menace to both humans and livestock alike. To rid themselves of the wolf problem, Clark and the other early settlers gathered their pitchforks and rifles and put on a drive.

On a cold early winter day in 1821 Clark, the Abington farmers and volunteers from as far away as Pittston gathered along Leggett's Creek in what is now called "the notch." From there the small army spread out and marched all the way to West Mountain toward a pocket near the present day Hyde Park section of Scranton. Musket shots rung out as the shouts of men wielding their pitchforks drove the wolves into the mountain pocket where they were killed. No record exists of the exact number of wolves killed that cold winter day in "the notch", but legend has it that the area was strewn with the carcasses of wolves along with deer and a few bear that "got in the way." For the rest of the week, the residents of the Abingtons feasted on bear meat and venison obtained in the great wolf hunt. The wolves never returned to the Abingtons from that day on.

Clark went on to establish a very successful farm. He is also credited with establishing the first apple orchard in the area. His apples were sold as far away as southern New York. In addition to apples, the Clarks began to tap the maple trees for their sap which was used for, among other things, making syrup.

Being a Deacon, William Clark was instrumental in organizing the first Baptist Church in the Area. In 1802 he hosted a meeting in his home to serve this purpose. He served as a deacon in The First Baptist Church until his death in 1827.

Historians have recorded many kind deeds performed by the Clark Family in assisting settlers who arrived in the area. They were known to provide food and shelter to those in need.

Name: _____ Section: _____ Date: _____

Questions from William Clark, First Settler in Clarks Summit

1. What year was William Clark born? _____
2. How old was William Clark when he joined the American Revolution? _____
3. What key revolutionary events did Clark take part in? _____
4. What was Clark given as compensation for his service in the Continental Army? _____
5. Who else claimed the land that William Clark was promised? _____
6. Where did Clark go to claim his land? _____
7. When William Clark found out that his land grant was “worthless”, what did he decide to do? _____
8. What was the area now known as Abington Heights originally known as?

9. What unexpected problem did Clark and the other early settlers of our area encounter? _____
10. What are some ways that the Clark family assisted other settlers moving into the area? _____